

CLAIMS

1. A method of managing service requests from a first module acting as a client module, to a plurality of other modules acting as server modules, the method comprising:
 - 5 an information-collating module receiving from each of the other modules an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules;
 - 10 at the first module, a control intermediary receiving from the information-collating module an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules;
 - 15 the control intermediary selecting one of the other modules for directing a service request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules.
2. A method according to claim 1, in which the first module comprises a client application and the control intermediary, the method comprising
 - 15 the control intermediary receiving a request for a Web service description from the client application, and selecting one of the other modules to direct the request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules;
 - 20 the control intermediary receiving the requested Web service description and substituting an identifier of the control intermediary into the description before passing the description to the client application.
3. A method according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising, the control intermediary repeating the step of selecting one of the other modules for directing a service request to, so as to identify an alternative other module, in the event that the transmission of the service request to the selected module fails.
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4. A method of managing service requests from a first module acting as a client module, to a plurality of other modules acting as server modules, the first module comprising a client application and a control intermediary, the method comprising:
 - 30 an information-collating module receiving from each of the other modules an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules;
 - the control intermediary receiving from the information-collating module an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules;

the control intermediary receiving a request for a Web service description from the client application, and selecting one of the other modules to direct the request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules;

5 the control intermediary receiving the requested Web service description and substituting an identifier of the control intermediary into the description before passing the description to the client application.

10 5. A method according to claim 4, further comprising, the control intermediary receiving a service request from the client application, and selecting one of the other modules to direct the request to based on the indications of the operational status of the other modules.

15 6. A method according to claim 5, further comprising the control intermediary repeating the step of selecting one of the other modules for directing a service request to, so as to identify an alternative other module, in the event that the transmission of the service request to the selected module fails.

20 7. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the control intermediary selects the one of the other modules on the basis of the loading of the modules.

8. A method according to any preceding claim, in which the control intermediary periodically polls the information-collating module to obtain the indications of the operational status of the other modules.

25 9. A system comprising a first module acting as a client module and a plurality of other modules acting as server modules, in which the client module is arranged to send service requests to the other modules, the system further comprising:

an information-collating module arranged to receive from each of the other modules an indication of the operational status of the other modules; and

30 the client module comprising a control intermediary arranged to receive from the information-collating module an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules, and further arranged to select one of the other modules for directing a service request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules.

10. A system according to claim 9, the first module further comprising a client application,

the control intermediary arranged to receive a request for a Web service description from the client application, and arranged to select one of the other modules
5 to direct the request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules;

the control intermediary arranged to receive the requested Web service description and substitute an identifier of the control intermediary into the description before passing the description to the client application.

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11. A system according to claim 9 or 10, the control intermediary further arranged to repeat the step of selecting one of the other modules for directing a service request to, so as to identify an alternative other module, in the event that the transmission of the service request to the selected module fails.

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12. A system comprising a first module acting as a client module and a plurality of other modules acting as server modules, the first module comprising a client application and a control intermediary, in which the client module is arranged to send service requests to the other modules, the system further comprising:

20 an information-collating module arranged to receive from each of the other modules an indication of the operational status of the other modules;

the control intermediary arranged to receive from the information-collating module an indication of the operational status of each of the other modules;

25 the control intermediary further arranged to receive a request for a Web service description from the client application, and to select one of the other modules for directing a service request to based on the indications of operational status of the other modules; and

30 the control intermediary arranged to receive the requested Web service description and substitute an identifier of the control intermediary into the description before passing the description to the client application.

13. A system according to claim 12, the control intermediary further arranged to receive a service request from the client application, and to select one of the other modules to direct the request to based on the indications of the operational status of the other modules.

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14. A system according to claim 13, the control intermediary further arranged to repeat the step of selecting one of the other modules for directing a service request to, so as to identify an alternative other module, in the event that the transmission of the service request to the selected module fails.
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15. A system according to any of claims 9 to 14, in which the control intermediary is arranged to select the one of the other modules on the basis of the loading of the modules.
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16. A system according to any of claims 9 to 15, in which the control intermediary is further arranged to periodically poll the information-collating module to obtain the indications of the operational status of the other modules.
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17. A system according to any of claims 9 to 16, in which the other modules are Web service servers.
18. A storage medium carrying computer readable code representing instructions for causing processors to perform the method according to any of claims 1 to 8 when the instructions are executed by the processors.
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19. A computer program comprising instructions for causing processors to perform the method according to any of claims 1 to 8 when the instructions are executed by the processors.
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20. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave and representing instructions for causing processors to perform the method according to any of claims 1 to 8 when the instructions are executed by the processors.
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21. A storage medium carrying computer readable code representing instructions for causing processors to operate as the system according to any of claims 9 to 17 when the instructions are executed by the processors.

22. A computer program comprising instructions for causing processors to operate as the system according to any of claims 9 to 17 when the instructions are executed by the processors.
- 5 23. A computer data signal embodied in a carrier wave and representing instructions for causing processors to operate as the system according to any of claims 9 to 17 when the instructions are executed by the processors.